WHAT WILL YOU DO WITH JESUS CHRIST

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THE BEST GIFT THAT I CAN CONCEIVE
THAT GOD COULD GIVE TO ONE
HUMAN LIFE IS OPPORTUNITY

TO MAKE OUR LIVES WORTH WHILE
WE MUST BE FILLED WITH FAITH

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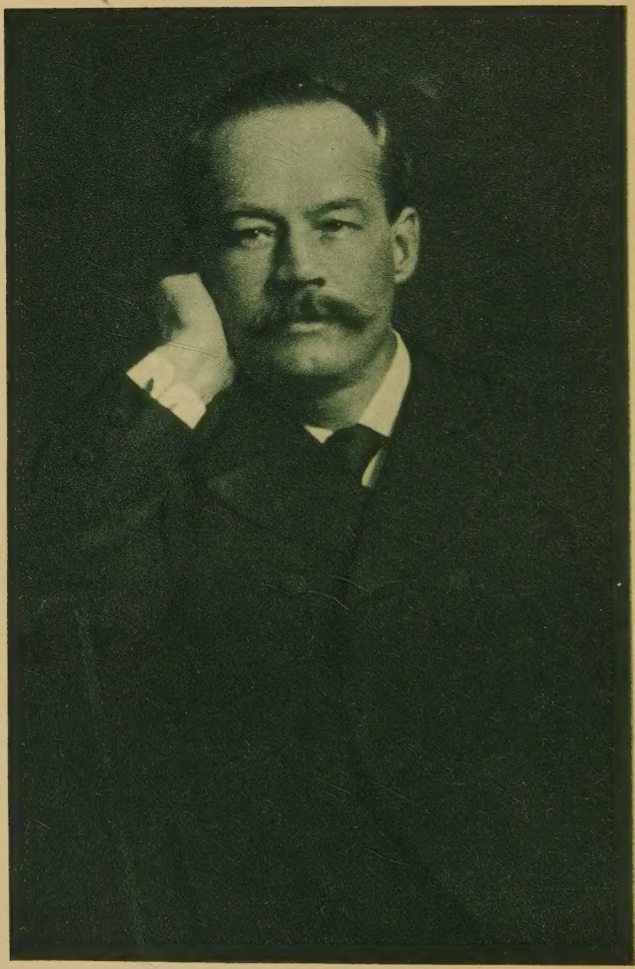

What Will You Do With Jesus Christ

BY

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FOREWORD

DURING his latest visit to the United States Dr. Grenfell was asked to occupy the pulpit at the regular formal service of worship held every Sunday morning at Harvard University. He accepted the invitation and utilized the opportunity not to describe his many-sided work for fishermen on the coast of Labrador, but to speak to that great company of college men and their friends concerning their personal relations to Jesus Christ. Appleton Chapel was crowded to the doors, many of the professors with their families as well as citizens of Cambridge and vicinity manifesting their desire to hear the well-known missionary. President Lowell read the Scriptures, as he regularly does, and from the time Dr. Grenfell entered the pulpit until he left it this congregation, representing so much in the way of culture and attainment,

listened attentively to his unconventional but exceedingly forceful appeal. It was indeed "a good word for Jesus Christ," to quote from Ian Maclaren's famous story "His Mother's Sermon." No preacher among the many distinguished ones at Harvard ever presented his Master's message more lovingly or with apparently greater effect. The depth of feeling recalled the memorable days when Phillips Brooks was in this same pulpit.

WHAT WILL YOU DO WITH JESUS CHRIST

Let us pray: Grant, Lord, we beseech thee,
that the words of our mouths and the
thoughts of our hearts may be
now and always acceptable
in thy sight, through
Jesus Christ, our
Lord.

WHAT WILL YOU DO WITH JESUS CHRIST

IN standing before you today I realize that I am in the presence of men who must have studied the philosophy of Christianity far more than I have. My rôle in life is that of surgeon, and I never have had time to devote to the study of theology. I can speak about Christianity not as a philosophy but only as a rule of life; about Christianity and the following of Jesus Christ as a power and a factor, whatever else they may be, in human concerns. It is as a man of faith that I want to speak this morning. And this is the definition of faith that I always

like best to have myself, because I understand it. It is one of the translations of the only definition of faith given in Scripture, viz., "Faith is the giving of substance to things hoped for."

AN EXPERIENCE IN THE EAST END

Twenty-six years ago I stood in the position which a great many members of this audience must be in today. You have been preparing for many years; and many of you are soon going to start out on your definite lifework — if there is ever such a thing as a beginning of a lifework. It was at that time I found myself confronted, quite unexpectedly, with practically the question Pilate put to the Jews, when they wanted to have Barabbas released to them: "What shall *I* do with Jesus, that is called the Christ?" I do not know that I had ever thought of it before; I had attended quite a number of services during my boyhood and young manhood. But they had never interested me, and it never occurred to me that the life of Jesus Christ and the personality

of Jesus Christ bore any relation to my own life at all. But as I say, through circumstances which I won't describe now, I was then suddenly brought face to face with that thought, "What shall I do with Jesus that is called Christ?"

I did not decide it immediately. But shortly after I did do so; and I decided in this way, viz., that I would give my substance to following him. That is what I call faith. Oddly enough I was sharing lodgings in the East of London; at that time I was at the largest hospital in England; with a man who was working out his education and spending his time, when he was not at his studies, as a Christian Evidence Lecturer. His shelves were filled with books on all sorts of philosophical subjects — Darwin's books and many similar ones — from which he

sought to find evidence for the faith that was in him. But my own shelves were filled with surgical books and other books of that kind, which occupied all the time I could give to head work. I had to just take my Christianity on faith, and that is all I can stand for here today. Jesus Christ said, "If you want to make your faith knowledge, be willing to do the things I say and then you shall know." This is the only line of reasoning I have followed.

The aspect of Christian life that appealed to me then, and has always appealed to me, was life on this earth. For I never worried my mind much about God's dealings with me or any other human soul when this life is over. The salvation that I was after was the salvation of this life — which is practically the same question which you must all now be propounding to yourselves — How am I going to make the most of the short stay on this earth? That is all I have that is my own. My silver and my gold — all such things are not mine; as the man who tried to swim ashore with a belt of gold, from a sinking ship, found. He didn't have it, it had him: as it has had many another man who was not either in or on the sea. But my *life is*

mine, and the salvation I was after was how to save for the best purpose such life as God gave me. I sought it by giving my substance to the things hoped for, and I certainly, honestly hoped, as I had seen life, that there was something better after its brief day here was over.

Eight years in the slums of Whitechapel, in Wapping, and the East India docks, among the sick and poor and degraded, between Poplar and the Mile End Road, left me with a very sincere hope that there *was* something better than the lot in life that was open to the people I lived among and learned to love. They did not wear silken hose and broadcloth, but they had human hearts and I learned to love them. I hoped that all that has been built up on the

teachings of the Christ, especially that there is eternal life for all of us, was true. I was willing to put my faith into it anyhow.

What again is this definition of faith? Faith is the giving of substance to things hoped for. There are men who despise the Christian faith as they see it today; but no man despises that kind of faith which makes a man willing to give what he has, and all he has. It is quite *possible* we may be mistaken; there may be nothing afterwards. But Jesus Christ says, through one of his disciples, "He who believes in him shall have no cause for shame." And the man who puts his hands in that of the Christ's and is willing to follow him, may possibly meet such shame — if you call it shame — that Jesus Christ had to bear. It may cost

him something, it may cost him the carrying of a cross; but who can say, that though it costs a cross, it ever brings a man real shame.

It is only twenty-six years truly that I have tried, and then feebly and as any other man might try, to give my substance to him whom I believe gave himself for me. And yet I should say that had I been trying, as a surgeon, a remedy for twenty-six years, and had found it had not failed me, so far as my intellect and my common sense were able to judge, that I would be justified in commending that same thing to others. And it is with that hope that I venture to stand here this morning and to commend to this large audience the faith in Jesus Christ that will just take him at his word. I wish further to say that I believe it true that that will bring no man to shame.

The first question, of course, that comes to a man when he is accepting a new rôle

in life like that is, What am I to do? I remember talking that over, because like all men we hear so many things said — as a Christian you ought to do this — you ought to do that — you should not do this, and should not do the other. I always think that one of the beautiful things about the Bible is, it never gives itself away by telling you not to do things or to do things. Instead it always gives you the underlying principle such as "love one another," and it puts into your mouth the simplest of all prayers, "Teach me to do the thing that is pleasing to thee."

If we are to be made preachers of this gospel, how are we to do it? How are we to command this teaching of Jesus Christ that we believe in? "By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if

ye do the things I command you." And how are we best to satisfy the Master? It seems to me we have graded our preachers wrongly sometimes. We think the man who has the clearest intellectual apprehension and the greatest capacity for intellectual reasoning shall be the best preacher. I wonder whether it struck many of us that Jesus Christ's only disciples were never graded in that way; nor were they ever admitted to this service for their correct opinions. Christ never asked a man first what he believed, but he just set him to work.

It seems to me it was only at the very end of his life that he asked them what they did believe, and then only one of them answered and said, "Thou art the Christ!" and a few minutes later even he had to be called down with a "Get behind me, Satan." His faith was not the valuable asset that he thought it was; and out of the twelve that Christ was willing to be allied with under the name of disciples, not one of them had the ability to say that he believed what so many men think necessary that we should say we believe, before we dare look upon ourselves as Christ's followers.

If the Christ could permit Judas to be one of his disciples, I thought also the Christ would permit me. "Not every one that saith thou art the Lord shall enter

the Kingdom; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven."

What do men in this audience think today is the best gift that God on high could give a human being? I do not think we think much about it, perhaps. But if we do think about it I am sure no one in his senses would get up and say, "the best thing God could give a human being is a large income," for of course it involves many other things to make a large income of the least good to a man — even Solomon saw that, and so he asked for wisdom.

The best gift that I can conceive that God could give to one human life is opportunity. A man may be an excellent surgeon and may know his work at his fingers' ends — but if he never finds any one who needs his help, he can never

attain to success in life. Only the men that God gives in life opportunity to do things can make success of life. One of my colleagues on a very small salary was offered double to leave us. He had a young wife and family. His answer was, "I would not trade my opportunity here for ten salaries."

Success seems to me in human life to be not in what we have, but what we do with what we have, i.e., on the opportunity to use it. We see the truth of this when men look back on life. What, after all, shall appear to have been the real source of joy in life? Christ says in one place, "Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." What was Christ's joy? It certainly was not in ease and comfort; it was not in long life or in the applause of men; it was not in riches and things of that kind.

Who will question, when we come really to think of it, that those things are paltry things compared with the lasting joy of having done things?

FAITH A GREAT DYNAMIC

What is it that makes men do things? Is it philosophy? That may be so. But for my part I do not see how any man can do anything without faith. You cannot find a new cure for evil or pain or sorrow without faith. You cannot run a business without faith. In the business world while some men are doing exactly what a great many men are doing with Jesus Christ — waiting to know this and to know that and to know the other before they venture on some undertaking, another man with only faith steps into the position and their opportunity is lost.

I think the trouble with many of us is that we think that by much learning we shall find out God! We think that we shall get sure of the premises on which

to base our relationship to Jesus Christ by the study of books and the hearing of lectures! Christ said, "If you are willing to do, you shall know." His spirit will still animate our hearts and lives and dwell within us, if we are willing. To me it is a question of whether we are willing to follow the Christ, whether we are willing to pay the price of following the Christ or not. It is a terrible thing to read, as I read last week in the story of Judge Lindsey's work in Denver, in that book called "The Beast," that out of one hundred and fifty churches only five churches came to his help in his fight against the brothel and the dive; and the reason was, apparently, that they were afraid of the consequences! In reality they had no faith.

But I say Christ does do for men today what he promised to do, and what these accounts tell us he did do. He took then a fisherman who was ignorant and unlearned, who lied before a handmaid and ran away from a handful of soldiers, and made that man into the Peter that the world has ever since honored. And he does it again now. If as a surgeon I stood before you today and advocated a remedy that 1900 years ago made great cures, and you were to say, "Well, I don't see that it ever does it now," and I were not able to point to any such results now, I should appear to be either a knave or a fool. What sane man would spend his time in advocating that which had not for centuries fulfilled its promises in the benefits it claimed to be able to perform?

All I can reiterate as I stand here is that I am sure that to make our lives worth while we must be filled with faith: that I have seen myself over and over again, just as I have seen the temperature fall and life restored as some course of treatment benefits a dying man, so have I seen the cruel man made kind and the drunken man made sober, and the impure man made pure, and the feeble man made strong, and the coward made brave, just as I read you out of the letter to the Hebrews that faith in God did those things of old.

I thank you for this chance to stand before you. I shall close, as I began. I am only able to commend the service of Jesus Christ to you, because I believed in him, and experience has convinced me that what Paul said is true; that our lives, by "being in union with Christ, can be made to diffuse the fragrance of the knowledge of him in every place." By union with him I have seen men making these tiny homes in Whitechapel and on the Labrador coast that were little better than hells on earth into places where God's love dwelled, where men gave as well as took, where poverty did not make the world look half so blue as riches often do, where tender and fearful people were enabled to meet calmly crises in life, before which many of us today would fail.

I have seen this faith make men strong and women tender, giving them in these prosaic days the power to be true and self-forgetful; just as in that long list of men of which we read this morning men were made pure and powerful and unselfish and successful by faith.

If I might leave with you one question, it would be the question that I faced in the same way all of a sudden twenty-six years ago: What shall I do with Jesus, that is called the Christ?

Let us pray: Our Father in heaven, faith has brought us into this chapel this morning, and in faith we raise our voices and our hearts, believing that thou hearest. Grant that we may not be confounded: hear our humble prayers and help us to stretch out that hand of faith which has never been stretched out in vain. And answer and bless and forgive us our feeble following. We ask it for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

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